

State has necessarily passed, before being re-distributed through the various arteries of the professions, through the length and breadth of the land, a seat of learning—which, instead of conveying vital force and energy to the whole body politic—has infected it with the plague of scepticism or deadly indifference? We all know how any great moral or social question first agitated in our English Universities, spreads like a wave, over the whole face of English society, stirring up the central deeps of all thought and action in the country, how the predominance of any one school of thought, acts upon and influences the tone of a generation. And so too, must it be here. As yet we do not feel it, for the University has been too weak in numbers, too fluctuating in form and system, to have produced any appreciable influence. But the fruits of a godless system need not be waited for. Before the harvest is ripe, we know what the crop must be. But it is for every thoughtful mind, for every lover of his country, for every heart influenced by religion, to determine that no such seed shall be sown at all. In a little while it will be too late. If against the protest of nine-tenths of the people of this country, the funds for University Education are to be administered under the present arrangement—if every salutary rule and controlling safeguard which gives a dignity and moral weight to the English Universities is to be relaxed to secure even respectable members,—if the standard of Education is to be continually lowered to outbid rival establishments—if scholarships are to be thrown broadcast throughout the country without the necessity of residence—if prizes in law and medicine are to be in the gift of a University which, having no faculties in these branches, does not pretend to teach them,—if by an unlimited choice of subjects, the easy taking of a degree, instead of giving severe mental discipline, leads to mere sciolism and a smattering of multifarious acquirements—then let us fear that these along with unlimited State resources, may crush mere voluntary effort, even though this be made for the cause of religion. Already a Professor of University College has boasted before the Parliamentary Committee, that they have amongst their students more Churchmen than are educated at our Church University, with what truth we know not; but the moral is plain and pointed. One question every Christian parent ought to ask himself, and we would recommend it to his serious attention. When his son is for the first time removed from the moral restraints and sanctifying influences of home, when his intellectual powers are first consciously developing,—when the dark and perplexed problems that underlie all social, moral and physical questions make their first appearance in the mind's horizon—when the complex phenomena of the moral and mental world are first presented to the consciousness—is this the time when the light of the gospel is especially to be withdrawn, and is he then to be left without star or compass, to wander amid all the baleful errors that surge up and “tumble in the godless deep?”

THE TORONTO SYNOD.

We print in another column a motion of great importance to the clergy of the Diocese of Toronto, who are all more or less concerned in the right management of the Commutation Fund. Without casting any imputations whatever upon its present management, they not only have a right to know, but, for the future interests of the Church, are bound to ascertain, how the money is invested, and by whom the securities are held.

We have not received any definite information as to the terms of Dr. Beaven's report on Hymns and Psalms, but we sincerely trust that he will not omit to read his correspondence with the Bishops of Montreal and Huron, to whom the proposed Hymnal was referred.

The report of the Committee on the election of Bishops, which suggests, we understand, that the Bishops of Canada be formed into a self-electing college, we shall comment upon next week.

We would call attention to the new Statute passed by the Corporation of Trinity College, Toronto, permitting candidates to be admitted to degrees in arts, by examination, without residence or attendance at lectures, for the next five years.—Although this relaxation is very carefully guarded, by the limitations and provisions annexed, yet we cannot but express our opinion that it is a step in the wrong direction. It seems to be a bid for popularity, by imitating the University of Toronto, in the worst, and, for the cause of education, most pernicious feature of its system. We should have thought it sufficient for any person passing such examinations to have obtained a certificate of attainment, without having conferred upon him a degree which is always understood to imply a University education.

Literature.

A Commentary on the Psalms, from Primitive and Mediæval writers. By the Rev. J. M. Neale, M.A. Vol. I. (Masters.)

Mr. Neale commences his introduction with a quotation from St. Chrysostom, which sets forth the idea which the early church had of the use of the Book of Psalms:

“ * * * If we keep vigil in the Church, David comes first, last, and midst. If early in the morning we seek for the melody of hymns, first, last, and midst is David again. If we are occupied with the funeral solemnities of the departed—if virgins sit at home and spin, David is first, last, and midst. O marvellous wonder! Many who have made but little progress in literature, nay, who have scarcely mastered its first principles, have the Psalter by heart. Nor is it in cities and churches alone, that, at all times and through every age, David is illustrious: in the midst of the forum, in the wilderness and uninhabitable lands, he excites the praises of God. In monasteries, among those holy choirs of angelic armies, David is first, midst, and last. In the convents of virgins, where are the bands of them that imitate Mary—in the deserts, where are men crucified to this world, and having their conversation with God, first, midst, and last is he. All other men are at night overpowered by natural sleep; David alone is active; and, congregating the servants of God into scaphic bands, turns earth into heaven, and converts men into angels.”

Our own church, perhaps, more than any other, retains in this respect the primitive spirit: not only are the psalms read through month by month, but the whole language of the services is imbued with them. And in giving them thus to her members as their daily spiritual food, she intended, doubtless, that we should not rest in the mere outward sense, but dig beneath the surface, for their hidden wealth of spiritual meaning. The Mediæval, no less than the primitive church, loved to do this, and Mr. Neale has done good service by showing how vast and varied were the treasures of truth which they found. The beginning of the commentary on Psalm xix. may be taken as an example:—

“ By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.” What heavens are these, says St. Gregory, except the Holy Apostles! And this is the key note by which all the Fathers interpret this psalm. That, as the visible heavens set forth the glory of the Creator, so the spiritual heavens should declare the praise of the Redeemer. Therefore, in every festival of the Apostles, this psalm has borne its part: and every clause and paragraph has been interpreted, with a holy ingenuity, in this sense. The firmament, from St. Augustine downwards, they take to be that firmness in speaking the Apostolic message, even before kings, and not being ashamed; that fearing not them that kill the body, and after that have no more than they can do, which the Apostles, weak enough till then—they who had all forsaken their master and fled—received on the descent of the Holy Ghost at the day of Pentecost. By it they showed His handiwork: the work by which in His great humility, He wrought out salvation—His incarnation, His earthly life, His passion. Truly, as, according to that beautiful idea in the decoration of Egyptian pyramids, the corners are embellished with the blue wings of the sky, keeping watch over, and guarding, all inferior objects—so the Apostles, separated once to meet no more on earth, kept watch over all its regions, from the labours of St. Thomas in China, to those of St. Mathew in Ethiopia, and St. Paul in Spain.”

So long as the literal is not confounded with the mystical sense, this deep and minute study of the words of Scripture is a great help to devotion. We should hardly, perhaps, go so far as Mr. Neale—in the valuable dissertation on the subject which the volume contains—in vindicating its absolute usefulness: but we cannot help pointing out the great variety and excellence of the spiritual instruction which have been the fruits of its application to the Psalter.